

## ***10 Pieces of advice to help you for the English written expression exercise***

1. Use plain English. You need to be able to get your message across. A sentence with simple correct English is infinitely better than a complex syntax structure full of mistakes.
2. Show you can conjugate a verb (final S on the regular verbs in the third person), use the passive voice and choose the preterit or the present perfect appropriately, especially in your first sentence. Remember how to ask a question (in English you invert subject and auxiliary), and how to negate properly (don't use double negatives), etc.
3. Show that you know the basics about nouns and articles: uncountable/countable, definite/indefinite/zero, generic etc.
4. Don't use pseudo-intellectual (often out-dated) vocabulary: for example, avoid 'tantamount', 'deem' and 'moot'; normal English speakers use these words once a year, if that. English has lots of common words that are perfectly appropriate: 'think', 'believe', 'consider' etc.
5. Similarly, expressions (slang) in English age very, very quickly and often seem out of place. This exam is not a competition to see who has learnt the longest list of vocabulary. Leave 'nutshells', 'doldrums' and 'milestones' where they belong, on the 'back burner'!
6. Show you know the basic differences between French and English: faux amis, word order, adjectives don't take a final S, 'depuis' does not always correspond to 'for', no 'be' with 'agree' etc.
7. Show you have a basic understanding of *register*. Take two minutes to think about the context. 'Hence', 'thus' and 'moreover' are not appropriate in all circumstances. At the other end of the scale, beware of gangsta-rapspeak: 'gonna', 'wanna', 'homey' and 'cool' are rarely 'awesome'.
8. Get straight to the point. You have 150 words to convince the examiners that you can use authentic English. If you're asked to write a dialogue or a letter, you don't need an introduction and a conclusion. If you are asked for an opinion, please say what you think ("I believe...") and not "we can think", "one may wonder" etc.
9. Indicate the *true* number of words. Respect the word limit: the corrector will stop reading after 150 words.
10. Lastly, take 5 minutes at the end to re-read and check for silly mistakes (3rd person final S, irregular verbs, etc.).